

# BIZARRE BEYOND BELIEF

ARTS x CULTURE x MAGAZINE

🍁 ISSUE # 9





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ARTS x CULTURE x MAGAZINE

• ISSUE # 9

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Dedicated to the brilliant, beautiful and bizarre. Whimsical tales, visuals and various odds and ends about obscure and misunderstood sub-cultures.





消防知识









# ASESR

ASESR IS ONE OF THOSE GRAFFITI ARTISTS THAT WHEN YOU SEE HIS WORK, YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY CAPTIVATED. THE MOVEMENT, THE EXPRESSION AND THE COLOUR BLOWS YOUR MIND RIGHT AWAY. WE'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH CANADIAN GRAFFITI SCENE FOR MANY YEARS NOW AND HAVE BEEN A FAN OF THIS GUY FOR A LONG AS WE CAN REMEMBER. WE KNOW AFTER FLIPPING THROUGH THE PAGES OF HIS INTERVIEW, YOU WILL FALL IN LOVE WITH HIS STYLE.





### Bizarre Beyond Belief: Can you tell us about your first mission painting?

ASESR: Back in high school my house had an old beat up garage that was never used for parking a car inside. I had been sketching for a while and had never used spray paint so I decided the garage was the first place to give it a go. Some of my friends had already been painting for a while so I figured this would be the best way to avoid completely embarrassing myself the first time I went out painting with them. Anyways, I did a little "ASES" piece and character. At that time I was writing "ASES" without the "R". It wasn't until years later that I added the "R" (I went back and forth

for a while and it was Demer that convinced me the R should stick, but that's another story). The piece was all stock caps as caps weren't easy to get and I didn't know how to use skinny caps properly anyways. I did the first outline, filled everything in and started outlining... the A seemed tougher than I thought it should be. I kept missing lines, and then realized I had been using my right hand the whole time! I'm a lefty! No clue why the can went into my right hand to begin with but I sorted that out quickly and the rest is history.

### BBB: What's the most fucked-up thing you've seen while bombing?

ASESR: The first year I was living over in Taiwan it had been raining

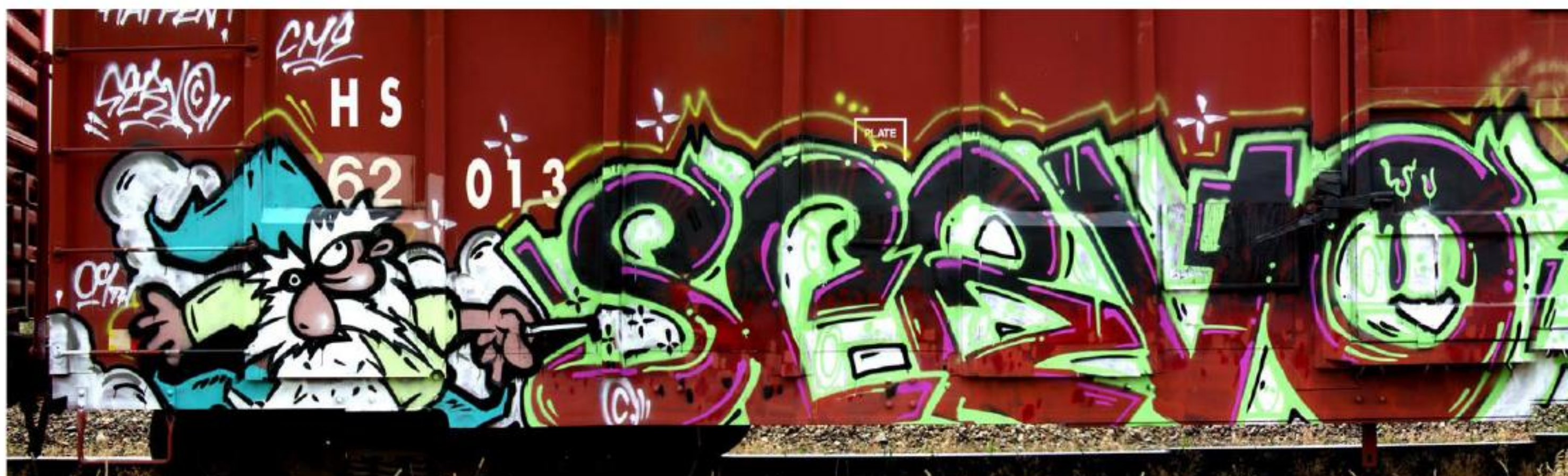
for at least a month straight, and real rain, not a light sprinkle, some tropical evil umbrella killing rain. During that time we were painting as many covered, dry spots as we could, and I went out solo to paint a trackside piece at a pretty well known bridge spot. I got there and was looking for a spot to paint, came around a pillar, and there was a severed dog head on the ground next to an empty bottle of booze... and pretty fresh looking. Within a couple feet of that was a pile of all the dogs' insides swarming with flies. Next to that was a plastic bag with the skinned fur and legs partially in the bag. It was pretty disgusting! I grabbed a couple quick photos for proof and painted somewhere else.



















**BBB: What's the stupidest thing  
BBB: What's the last thing you'd  
ever do while painting?**

ASESR: I'm not really sure how to answer this one, ha ha. Hopefully it's "Never do anything stupid to cause unneeded trouble for me or whoever I'm painting with." I would also never paint naked in a hailstorm in the middle of nowhere, at night, without a cell phone – that would suck.

**BBB: You're a graffiti artist who's  
done a lot of traveling, what city  
would you say is your favourite to  
paint in?**

ASESR: I love painting in other cities and countries. Meeting new people, painting new spots, matching photos you've seen to the actual spots – it's great! As far as painting other cities, Taipei was where I have probably painted the most outside of Canada,

and it was amazing. I lived there on and off for 3 years and not once was I ever stumped for a place to paint. It was like Disney Land for a writer (I've actually never been to Disney Land but you know what I mean). Huge abandoned spots, raw concrete for days, and anything and everything in between. I first visited back in 2004 and it was interesting to see graffiti grow in popularity. There were a handful of talented local writers and Dabs (Canada) had been holding down the fort for years prior. As time went on some local writers developed super quickly and more foreign writers caught drift of what was going on and coming over to live and/or visit. I'm not sure how things have changed since then, but from what I see there is still some great work being done.

**BBB: How would you describe the  
cultures between various cities to**

**your native hometown?**

ASESR: I grew up in Kamloops, a few hours North East of Vancouver. It's not a big city by any means, but it used to be a pretty awesome graffiti city and was pretty accommodating towards graffiti murals. CMOR (BSM/BA) was part of the graffiti task force. He really worked on pushing the cities' views towards graffiti in a positive direction. Together, they helped set-up some massive murals in the city and brought some great writers together. Murals from such writers as: CMOR, SNSR, TAKE5, KWEST and others, can still be seen around the city. At one time, there was a huge legal wall in the city and these open creek walls that ran for kilometres through Kamloops that were legal to paint. So when we were just starting out there was ample room to paint and improve.



Of course, that all changed, the city brought in a graffiti-hating task force, got rid of all the legal spots, marketed graffiti writers as drug dealers, claiming that car thefts and home robberies were directly linked to writers. Ha ha! That ol' fairytale! In high school I managed to talk to some business owners who agreed to let us paint their buildings. Since then, some of the walls remain, but many are gone. There are a few today that can still be seen and painted around the city. At least now it's nice to know not everyone hates on it. After my high school years I decided

to travel. Moving overseas and painting was a big change for me. Kamloops had limited spots, and as I had just moved to a large Asian city with more spots than I could fathom, it was time to get busy. After my first year in Taiwan, I moved to Japan. While living there I met a good local writer who unfortunately caught some jail time for graffiti – and apparently jail over there is pretty awful. Luckily, I stayed clear of that while I was living in the country. Taiwan however was much different. There were times painting in Taiwan where parents would take pictures of their children standing in front of

us while we were painting. People would come up and say how much they liked it, and on one occasion I had a guy come and say "Thank You!". I was like... "For what"? And he replied, "For giving the young kids someone to look up to." That's always nice to hear! Of course some people will always hate. And many people that like the colourful pieces weren't necessarily keen on enjoying the bombing aspect of graffiti. But for the most part, it was much more accepted amongst the population while I was there. Much different than what I was used to back in Canada.





“IT ALSO GIVES YOU THAT KIND OF SECOND LIFE. SOME  
PEOPLE KNOW YOU BUT DON'T KNOW YOU WRITE.”









**BBB: Your style ranges from abstract burners to crisp font styles, how does your approach differentiate when creating one or the other?**

ASESR: The location and spot have always been a big factor in determining my approach. I think that you should be able to work with what you have, not get to a spot and decide not to paint because the spot doesn't match your idea or the prepared sketch. Sometimes I have a rough, super messy, scrap piece of paper, with single letters, angles or connections on them for basic ideas of what I want to do. It also depends on my mood. If I've done nothing but complex pieces for a while, I'll try and switch it up to something different. I've been sketching and painting some simpler, rounder kinds of summer-time fun looking stuff lately. It's a good way to get out of my

comfort zone and experiment with new combinations and techniques. As well, who I'm painting with will affect the final product. I like to bounce ideas around with my painting compadres. So, if I'm painting with someone who feeds off of that, things may turn out differently because they have injected some interesting ideas into the mix.

**BBB: How do you feel graffiti has helped or hindered in the creation of your fine art or design work?**

ASESR: Well, it definitely has helped... I think... I hope. When I started going to school for design, I was able to bypass the first quarter, which mainly consisted of fine art, colour theory, and some basic Photoshop. What better way to learn colour theory than years of planning

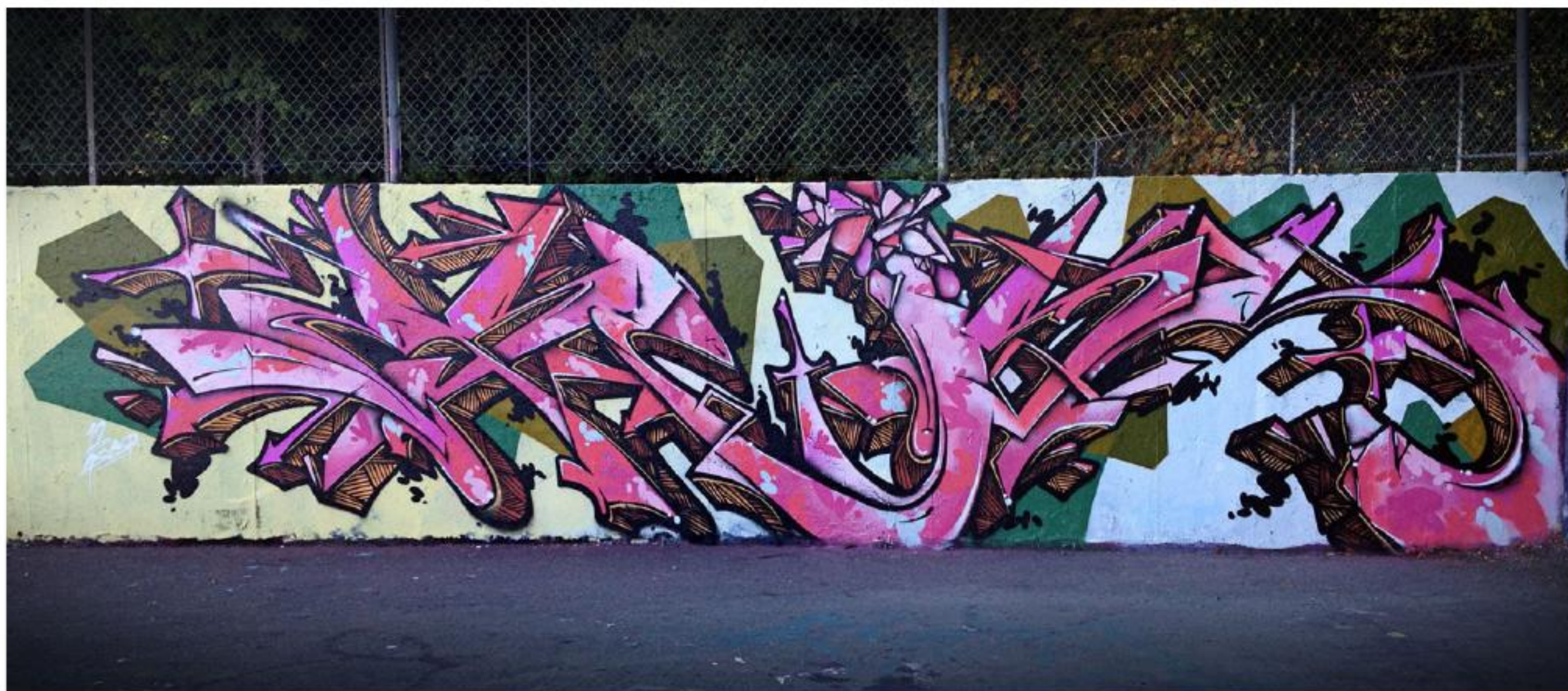
colour schemes and combinations? It's also helped my understanding of font and balance. I think it works both ways. I think graffiti has helped my design ideas and process and I think design has definitely helped change my graffiti and thinking.

**BBB: What is it that graffiti gives you that nothing else in the world can?**

Free therapy? Ha ha. Honestly though, it's a great creative outlet. It lets you focus on one task and not worry about anything else. You get to combine so many awesome things under one umbrella - creativity, expression, adventure, exploring, travel, meeting new people, discovery etc. It also gives you that kind of second life. Some people know you but don't know you write. Others know







you write but don't know what you do day-to-day – that's interesting to me.

**BBB: If you're chipping away at burner or production, what 5 albums may be rocking on your iPod during painting?**

ASESR: Well hopefully I, or someone I'm painting with, has an iPod because if not, you'll experience some bad, yet catchy song, that's been stuck in my head, blasted through my untrained, not built for singing, voice. Ha ha. But if we happened to be blessed with a music device, I have the old classic 120GB iPod that has only like 15GB

left on it. It's packed with all types of music. I go through different stages with music, so I'm not sure what I would be listening to... I like most kinds of music to a degree. I don't have any country on my iPod though... That I know for sure! Other than that, it's a toss up.

**BBB: What three things, non-graffiti related, could you not live without?**

In no particular order: My camera, my "His & Hers" non matching but complimenting bath towels and a sense of humour. I'm actually really not too sure about that one.

**BBB: Are there any trips, events or upcoming projects readers and fans should know about in the near future?**

ASESR: Most of my upcoming projects are design related. But as far as graffiti goes, I'm trying to get out to visit SERVO for some freight adventures, (I've been sleeping on those lately and it should probably change) as well as an annual trip down to Washington with SERVO to get some projects accomplished with some of the friendly locals we've been lucky enough to build some relationships with.

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FLICKR: ASESER

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A black and white portrait of a man with dark, wavy hair, looking down and to the left. He is wearing a dark leather jacket with visible zippers and stitching. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Norman Wong

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NORMAN WONG IS A CANADIAN PHOTORAHER WHO HAS WORKED WITH SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN FASHION AND MSUIC FROM BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE TO ELMER OLSEN. HIS SIGNATURE BLACK AND WHITE PORTRAITS CAPTIVATE THE MOOD AND EMOTION OF THE SUBJECT WITH ELEGANCE AND DISTINCTION.

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**Bizarre Beyond Belief: As a photographer who began to work primarily as a hobbyist, when did you realize that this would lead into a lucrative career path?**

Norman Wong: It was definitely Elmer Olsen and his team (Richard Campbell and Ryan Greenwood at the time) who really started to push me towards the career I have now. Elmer runs one of the best modeling agencies in the country, and he definitely pushed me to realize that what I do can turn into a wonderful career!

**BBB: Many photographers attend institutions or use various methods of training to gain recognition in the field, do you feel as if these are necessary steps considering your success without it?**

NW: There is no right or wrong in attending any institutions, as long as you are passionate and skilled with a good attitude, you will succeed in anything you choose to pursue.

**BBB: Arts & Crafts and Elmer Olsen are highly regarded companies, what was the origin of those relationships and how did they form?**

NW: I got introduced to Arts & Crafts through my relationship with Brendan Canning and Kevin Drew from Broken Social Scene. I met Jeffrey Remedios who runs A&C

and his team very early on, and they really did welcome me right away. It wasn't until Brendan Bourke, who joined A&C briefly, really started commissioning me to do press photos for some of the A&C projects. Elmer Olsen on the other hand, took me under his wing very early on, and he was really the one who gave me my big break. I photographed a test for a fashion designer I got recommended to by a friend, and she used one of Elmer's models – he literally called me the second he saw the photos and brought me into his office. He was the first one who started to pay me to do test shoots for all his models – he firmly believed in me and I am forever grateful for that. It was Elmer, Richard Campbell and Ryan Greenwood who really helped bring me up into becoming a working photographer, and Broken Social Scene/Arts & Crafts who helped me stay interested and engaged with my work and helped me evolve. I never wanted to be a photographer, but meeting these people helped push me to this insane career.

**BBB: As a Canadian photographer, do you feel it's a more difficult community to achieve success as opposed to larger cities like London or New York?**

NW: I can't really say, I've never tried London or New York although sometimes I wish I was born in those cities. I would say there isn't too much

of a big difference, since people are breaking internationally here without being in London or New York. Take a look at people like The Coveteur and Tommy Ton – they have made big waves in the fashion world without being located in any of those cities, and they're all from here!


**BBB: Considering you work with a variety of different publications that vary immensely in style and aesthetic, what are some of the challenges, if any, you face when completing works for the different companies?**

NW: I've never had an official website, so I would sometimes get confused as to what attracted a publication to assign me a project. I really just sometimes have to ask them directly how they would like me to spin this story, but most of the time they just give me free range and I work accordingly within their world.

**BBB: Working with both the fashion industry and the music industry, how does your approach to the subject differentiate?**

NW: Fashion is a little trickier because it serves a purpose and an objective: to show garments. It's a fine balance you have to dance with when working with fashion clients, between finding the right vibe or mood that works with the objective. On the other hand, music is all about the vibe and mood and it's about the artist





or band. This is speaking from my experiences working in Toronto, it's a different story elsewhere.

**BBB:** As a man who works with very well-known and established musicians and models, do you find that the creative process is more difficult than if you were to work with lesser recognized individuals?

**NW:** Not one bit.

**BBB:** Considering the magnitude and exceptional success of the Arts & Crafts label over the past 10

years, what does it mean to you to be included in this event?

**NW:** It's a very special moment for me; I've been working on these portraits for over the past 8 years and I did them for myself. It's a very personal collection.

**BBB:** We know what you will bring to the table in regards to photography, are there any other



surprises that you, or Arts & Crafts have in store for the 10th year anniversary?

NW: I've been hearing talks about some interactive/video projects that have been developing in relation to a special album, but that's all confidential.

BBB: Has there ever been a time in your career where you have needed to jeopardize your artistic integrity to make ends meet or is it more important to create work you truly love?

NW: Both – I do work all the time to make a living and I do work all the time that I truly love, it's all about balance. I often find myself taking on assignments that have no relation to my personal work, but take the opportunity to make the best of it and use the money to fund my own personal projects.

BBB: Your work is generally created in black and white, is there a particular reason in your decision to work in such a method as to colour?

NW: This is mostly relating to my personal work, my commercial work is actually quite colourful and bright most of the time. I really do enjoy working with black and white film – it has a tone and texture I can't achieve with anything else. It's hard to convince some publications I work with to use black & white film, but I'm happy to have a nice separation between my personal and my commercial work sometimes.

BBB: We understand you have a highly anticipated upcoming show for the Scotia Bank Contact Photography Festival, what else does Norman Wong have in store for the near future regarding projects and events?

NW: I'm going to take time to work on another book about my friend Dana Wright, which will be a long and ongoing process. Otherwise, I'm going to try to finally launch a website.

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NORMWONG.TUMBLR.COM

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“AS LONG AS YOU ARE PASSIONATE AND SKILLED  
WITH A GOOD ATTITUDE, YOU WILL SUCCEED”













# NAKS [SDK]

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NAKS IS A STRAIGHT GRINDER IN THE GRAFFITI GAME. HIS HARDCORE AND UNFORGIVING STYLE AND ATTITUDE IS WHAT KEEPS THIS CULTURE RAW. A PART OF THE INFAMOUS STOMPDOWN KILLAZ CREW, NAKS GOES HARDER THAN MOST PEOPLE OUT THERE THESE DAYS. AFTER TRAVELING ALL OVER CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES, TWICE, NAKS IS BECOMING A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN THE NORTH AMERICAN GRAFFITI WORLD & AFTER READING THIS INTERVIEW, YOU'LL SEE WHY.

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**Bizarre Beyond Belief: Can you tell us about the first time you ever picked up a can and went out?**

NAKS: The first time I picked up a can I was about 11 or 12 years old. Being that I was young and senseless I went around the neighbourhood alleys at night and wrote BROZ on garage doors and shit. One guy heard us and jumped over his fence and chased us for blocks. I managed to get home but my step bro was gone for an hour after I got home. I thought he was toast.

Turns out he was hiding in a bush at the end of the block for an hour while this guy paced the alley looking for us. Good times.

**BBB: What's the most terrifying thing you've ever seen while out on a painting mission?**

NAKS: My boy LEP told me when I was young to never try and jump on a moving train ever. Well, one day I almost fucking died by doing just that. I was painting at a wall with Craver

and Capital Q (our filmer), a train was going by real slow so we went to get some footy of us throwing up hand styles on the moving cars. I jumped up on the ladder no problem about 2 or 3 times and got a few done. A little while later a train was going the opposite way but this time a bit faster so I grabbed the ladder and try to put my feet up on the very bottom step but I missed and both my legs went through the ladder and I actually kicked the wheel and I was basically hopping on 1 foot and holding on for dear life. I completely



panicked and did a suicide jump off the ladder onto the granite rocks down an embankment. Hands down one of the stupidest and most terrifying things I've ever done and will never do it again. FYI there is footage of the whole thing and its on our youtube channel titled: TRAINS ARE DANGEROUS.

**BBB: What's the stupidest thing you've ever done bombing?**

NAKS: Getting arrested!!!

**BBB: Considering graffiti has a number of aspects to its practice, such as tagging, bombing, piecing,**

**etc. Is there a particular facet of the art-form you enjoy above others?**

NAKS: I'm more of a technical guy, so I really focus my energy on letter structure and pieces. Tagging would have to be secondary. I have practiced my hand-style everyday for the past 10 years. It's definitely its own art form and the hardest thing to learn in my opinion. Productions with the homies really gets me up too!

**BBB: How has being a part of the StompDown Killaz impacted your life as both a graffiti writer and a person?**

NAKS: The boys in Stompdown are some of the most dedicated and ambitious guys I know and I'm blessed to be a part of such an great family. Stompdown has such a versatile group of talent in every trade which is something you don't see much of these days. Long story short, I've been through everything with the boys and have learned so much from everyone we're constantly growing and moving forward in a positive light, which is exactly what one needs to succeed in any craft one has passion for. So all in all I would say it has affected my life positively as both a graffiti writer and a person.





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**I WAS BASICALLY HOPPING ON ONE FOOT AND HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE**

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**BBB:** How do you feel being a Canadian graffiti artist has helped or hindered the ability to gain recognition?

NAKS: Your work and character as a person should speak for itself and that's what people remember when they meet you or see your work it doesn't really matter where you're from. Even though Canada is the most beautiful and free country on earth!

**BBB:** Being a writer who has traveled a lot, do you have any

particular cities that you would say are superior to paint?

NAKS: In the past 2 years I have been across Canada twice and down the west coast of the US. Montreal is a fucking rad city for graffiti its absolutely crushed and is definitely the funnest city I have been to in Canada. The "Mooks" out there know how to party and destroy shit better than anyone! Toronto was also good times, and a very graffiti orientated city. The most talented graffiti writers in Canada live and thrive out there it

was so inspiring to see what the guys out there have done coming together and painting some of the craziest production walls I've ever seen. I love that city for its quality and i will be back there before any other city in canada for sure.

**BBB:** And how do these cities compare to your own hometown?

NAKS: The buff is nasty as fuck since the Olympics came in 2010. Currently Vancouver's scene is pretty low key compared to Toronto and Montreal.





BBB: Besides graffiti, what are 5 things that you hold the nearest and dearest to your heart?

NAKS: My ambition and drive, my friends and family, and last but not least my love for sex drugs and rock

and roll!

BBB: If you were to be strapped with only one brand of can and cap for the rest of your career, which would they be and why?

NAKS: A can of Montana black with

a NY fat.

BBB: Do you still see yourself doing going hard in the paint in 10, 20 and 30 years?

NAKS: Most definitely!

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[WWW.STOMPDOWN.CA](http://WWW.STOMPDOWN.CA)

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# ORDR

## [KLA] CLASS ACTIONS

WE'VE KNOWN ORDR FOR MANY YEARS NOW AND ARE EXCITED TO HAVE HIM IN THE MAGAZINE. HIS INNOVATIVE AND BOLD STYLE IS FRESH AND FRIENDLY. FROM CANADA BUT NOW MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF IN CHINA AND MAYBE EVERYWHERE ELSE IN BETWEEN.





**Bizarre Beyond Belief: Can you tell us about your first mission painting?**

ORDR: I was in grade 7 with a can of red paint. I painted this hilariously bad thing that said epic, it was very epic though. After that me and two friends started a crew called MEB, it stood for out initials. We would go skate, smash our school windows and write on stuff. Those were the good days, things are much more complicated now.

**BBB: What's the most fucked-up thing you've seen while bombing?**

ORDR: I can't remember anything, though I'm sure I've seen some fucked up stuff, but my memory is not very good. However, one night i was biking home over this massive bridge here in China at about 3 a.m and way up ahead in empty road I see this dude just standing all weird. I got a bad feeling and I could tell he was fucked and he kinda started in my direction like zombies do in the movies. So, I just went as fast as I could right at him so he couldn't pin me to the side and just before i got to him I swerved around him and just then he jumps and lunges at me with about a 12 inch knife.

**BBB: What's the last thing you'd ever do while painting?**

ORDR: Hopefully I won't die well painting. Well maybe when I'm old that would be an okay way to go.

**BBB: You've now relocated to China, is there any particular reason for the move?**

ORDR: I came to china about 3 years ago. Kind of on a whim. It has turned out to be a good choice. No plans moving back to Toronto [my hometown] anytime soon.



**BBB: How would you describe the cultures between China and your native hometown of Toronto?**

ORDR: Vast, very vast. My home [Toronto] is extremely multi cultural and it's the opposite here. I live in a city called Guangzhou and the population is roughly 3 times the size of Toronto. Yet, the subway closes before 12 [Midnight] and most buses stop running at 10. There's also not many writers out here and there's a massive amount of street cleaners so with those two combined there's not too much graffiti in the streets.

**BBB: Your style ranges from font styles to colourful abstract characters, how does your approach differentiate when creating one or the other?**

ORDR: When painting letters I almost always have a rough thumb sized sketch. I doodle constantly and come up with most of my ideas like that. Before painting a piece I have to plan and have fresh cans. No scraps and random colours. I want to paint what I see in my head and not a half-baked version, which happens half the time anyways. For me nothing is

worse than walking away from a wall unsatisfied. When I'm not painting letters, I'm the exact opposite. I just throw tons of colours in my bag and just go for it. Not to say I don't have an idea of what I want but it is much more spontaneous compared to painting letters.

**BBB: How do you feel graffiti has helped or hindered in the creation of your fine art or design work?**

ORDR: I think those 3 titles are all the same thing. It just depends on how its presented. Though graffiti





HOLD YOUR DREAM.

KISS FUHR

UJEMMEEU-024





“

**I SWERVED AROUND HIM AND JUST THEN HE JUMPS  
AND LUNGES AT ME WITH ABOUT A 12 INCH KNIFE**

”











has definitely helped my other artistic pursuits. Growing up I was into sports and I only found graffiti because when I was young I liked causing trouble. Which is all too easy to do with a can of spray paint. Anyways what I'm trying to say is without graffiti i don't think i would of ever became an artist.

**BBB:** Where do you see the evolution of graffiti going in the

**next 25 years?**

**ORDR:** No idea. Go watch the Tron cartoon. They have some characters that do some crazy digital hacking graffiti.

**BBB:** If you're on a flight going back home from China, what 3 movies would you make sure to watch on the plane?

**ORDR:** All I can think of are some pretty stupid movies but like stupid movies. Bio Dome and In The Army Now, both featuring the one and only Pauly Shore. The final one to watch, I might as well go with Billy Madison.

**BBB:** If you could only paint one surface (i.e. Wall, Truck or Train) for the rest of your career, which would it be?



ORDR: Give me any surface in public place and I'm good!

**BBB: Are there any new projects readers and fans should know**

**about in the near future?**

ORDR: I have a lot of walls lined up that I'll be painting soon and a few I've done that not many people

have seen yet. Keep an eye on my flickr <http://www.flickr.com/photos/classactions/>. That's it really. Watch out for KLA CREW and thanks for the chance to run my mouth a bit.

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## FLICKR: CLASSACTIONS

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# KEVIN LEDO

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KEVIN LEDO IS A PORTUGUESE-CANADIAN ARTIST BASED IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC WITH A TECHNICAL ABILITY THAT MOST ASPIRING ARTISTS DREAM OF. THOUGH LEDO ISN'T RELIGIOUS HIS BEAUTIFULLY RENDERED PORTRAITURE THAT RESEMBLES THAT OF RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY GRACES BOTH WALLS AND CANVASES ALIKE. AN ARTIST WHO HAS ALSO BEEN FEATURED IN MAJOR PUBLICATIONS AND MUSEUMS, LEDO'S WORK ETHIC SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

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**Bizarre Beyond Belief: How has the Quebec, or more specifically, Montreal arts community shaped your development as an artist?**

Kevin Ledo: It's a big mix of everything in Montreal, that's for

sure, and Quebec in general is much different than the rest of Canada. For Montreal, I like the mix of what the combination of French settlers and English settlers eventually came to, and then on top of that all the cultures from all around the world

who added on to it. It's diverse in language, food, culture and attitudes, and has a little of everything. I love that appreciation for arts is naturally ingrained in many of the people of Quebec and how diversity in Montreal is for the most part celebrated. It's no utopia, that's for sure, there are haters on every angle, but it's been a good environment to grow in as an artist. Montreal has a healthy amount of artists, especially the area I live in, and it's a great thing to have friends doing art and organizing art based events. There are some really great artists here, and I'm constantly blown away with what my colleagues are doing.

**BBB: You're formal training is in illustration, however, you say you're "non-practising". What would lead you to stray away from continuing this path as an artist?**

KL: I think that's written in my artist statement somewhere isn't it? I feel like I should update that statement weekly because things are always in flux. Well, what I mean by non-practicing illustrator is that I'm not actively seeking out illustration work, nor do I do it very often. My focus is on









I'M FASCINATED BY BELIEF AND BELIEF SYSTEMS  
AND HOW IT AFFECTS EVERYONE'S LIVES



KEVIN LEDO.COM



painting and more recently also on art installations and murals. What led me away from illustration initially was how disillusioned I became with commercial artwork; I didn't like doing artwork that held no meaning for me. Right out of school I hadn't really developed a style or direction in my work, so the first work I found was in packaging and baby clothes... and that completely turned me off to illustration work. Plus I don't really like working, I mean if it feels like work, then I don't want to do it. Projects that I like and painting for myself doesn't feel like work, so I try to stick to that.

**BBB: Regardless, how has this training helped or hindered your technical ability as a painter?**

KL: I definitely learned some things, like image software, painting technique, colour and composition. Learning image software was definitely a huge plus, especially since I'm now practically using it daily. Whether it has hindered my ability as a painter, maybe in one respect; I had a tendency to over plan my paintings before I started painting and then force myself to stick to that exact plan. But in the past few years I've been moving more towards

spontaneity and instincts as I work. Illustration and Design school has probably helped over all more than it has hindered, though I still sometimes wonder what I would be doing now if I had studied fine arts instead.. probably writing artists statements and essays about what memory is and painting faux crack in the sidewalks.

**BBB: Your work uses many aspects of religious iconography, how is the message of your work affected due to your non-devout practice of religion?**

KL: Religion used to provide a















framework for my spirituality, because I've always had this spiritual side to me, and now in the absence of it, my artwork seems to be seeking out a new framework from all my beliefs, toying with my non-beliefs and dogma surrounding other people's beliefs. I'm fascinated by belief and belief systems and how it affects everyone's lives.

**BBB:** We also understand you're a Portuguese-Canadian, are these roots what tie you to the upbringing of Catholicism in your household?

KL: Yeah, that's pretty much bang on. I was raised Catholic by my Portuguese born parents, which was good, I just grew out of it once I started exploring other ideas.

**BBB:** As an individual who has gone through a number of personal evolutions such as, skate, rave, metal and hip-hop phases, what do/did these cultures bring to the table for you?

KL: To begin with, I was into

everything pretty much at the same time. I started out with metal, but never lost my love for it. Skating, metal and punk rock went hand in hand. Then techno and the millions of sub-genres came into the picture and I was raving regularly as a teenager, but never really stopped going to punk shows. My friend and I actually began throwing raves for a few years. I loved the creative side to throwing parties and massing together hundreds of people for an epic night. Hip-hop was always constant interest, and I did try



some breaking, but I was no b-boy. I did dabble in graffiti a little but it never really stuck, though I picked up spray cans again about 15 years later. I guess everything had an impact on who I am now. I clearly have a passion for music and culture, and I'm always looking for new experiences to inspire me.

**BBB:** Did they help your artistic practice or were they merely

personal pleasures?

KL: Metal album covers were a huge inspiration to me and among my first drawings were recreations of Pushead's illustrations for Metallica, Iron Maiden's Eddy, Megadeth's Vic Rattlehead, Suicidal Tendencies and Slayer's band logos and a bunch more. Later the characters of the 90s graffiti inspired me and I was constantly drawing in that style in sketchbooks and early paintings. Later on I was making rave flyers for all our events and all my friend's events. So it was a personal pleasure, but definitely helped me

in my practice as an artist.

**BBB:** It is extremely hard to be a career practising artist, how has the representation of galleries helped in your success as an artist?

KL: No doubt that that is true, it's not an easy path, it is so challenging in so many aspects. However, galleries have helped me by making me commit to get together bodies of work for shows. Galleries have

helped with exposure and it always helps to get that stamp of approval from an established gallery. Gallery sales have undoubtedly been a contribution.

**BBB:** If you were to describe your studio to a blind person, how would you?

KL: It's shared with some wonderful artists and people, very chaotic with paint all

over the walls.

There are big bright windows overlooking Montreal's Mile End, and I probably really need to do some cleaning and get rid of stuff that I won't ever eventually make art out of.

**BBB:** If there was only one genre of music to listen to in the world, what would it be and why?

KL: Ah that's waaay to difficult to choose, I'm such a huge music fan. Right now I'm really into idm and glitch, psychedelic rock and stoner metal, and also chillwave/glo-fi.



BBB: You have worked with a number of incredible publications and companies, are there any new projects or events our readers should be on the lookout for?

KL: I just got back from a 7-month trip through Central and South America, and on that trip I became more and more involved in murals and art installations at hotels, restaurants

and clubs. So for now, I plan to keep painting, and get more involved in these types of projects. I'll also be part of a show curated by Omen at Yves Laroché Gallery at the end of the year.

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# SERVO

SERVO IS A VERY WELL KNOWN CANADIAN GRAFFITI ARTIST AND FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS. HIS STYLE IS SO BRIGHT AND COLOURFUL AND THE MAN HAS ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF THE GAME LOCKED DOWN. FROM CRUSHING BURNERS ON TRAINS THAT LOOK BETTER THAN MOST PEOPLE'S PRODUCTIONS, TO GOING THROUGH ASIA AND SHOWING PEOPLE OF HOW BEAUTIFUL GRAFFITI CAN TRULY BE, WE'RE HONOURED TO HAVE HIM IN THIS ISSUE AND HEAR HIS TAKE ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES.







**Bizarre Beyond Belief: Can you describe the first time you went out painting?**

SERVO: So, my first time painting. Honestly, it is difficult to recall the first time I went painting, but I remember one of my first freight missions I went on, way back when. Like all young hooligans, I thought that freights could be painted anytime and anywhere. I decided to go to the main yard and paint a boxcar that was located

on one of the live tracks. I had no idea what lay-ups were, that freights could move at any time, or even if it was safe to be painting on the main line, I just knew that I wanted to do something on a freight car. So just as my partner in crime and I were getting ready to unpack our bags, we noticed a shadowy figure run past us just a few cars down and hop up and over the line of freights to the other side. Chalking it up to some random passerby looking for a short cut, we

proceeded towards our target. Not a minute later, as we were discussing our plan of attack, two cop cars pulled up and rushed us with force. "PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!" Was the first thing that we heard. Could it be? Busted on our very first mission even before the paint had exited out nap-sacks? And these cops were for real! No messing around with small talk. Well, after a lengthy interrogation we discovered that the 'shadowy figure' was a thief who had



just robbed the local gas station across the street, for some quick loot. The cops thought that we had done it and threatened to arrest us. Long story short, we got off scott free and told the cops to head “in that direction” If they wanted to find the real culprit. The rest my friends, is history.

**BBB: What's the strangest thing you've ever seen while out bombing?**

SERVO: A couch in a garbage pile I tagged while visiting Macao. After hours of walking and thinking I knew the way home, I realized that I had just done a four hour loop around the city back to that very same couch. Then, having to walk another two hours in the

opposite direction to find my hotel, I got lost again and had to negotiate a taxi ride. In short, it was an extremely long night.

**BBB: What's the stupidest thing you've ever done on a mission?**

SERVO: Mixing graffiti and copious amounts of alcohol. It gets you to sloppy-tags-ville real fast, and possibly a night in the slammer.

**BBB: You paint a lot of freight trains, how would you compare freights to walls?**

SERVO: In my opinion, the approach between walls and freights

is different but, can be similar at the same time. With walls comes preparation, through sketches, colour schemes, backgrounds, and characters, which can take several days or weeks. Freights contain some of the same principals, only on a smaller scale. If I am planning on doing a freight production, its usually pretty spontaneous based on the colours I and my painting partner have. The whole idea of the freight mission is really fun though, from plan to execution, no two freight nights are the same. I love seeing something I've done rollin', and saying “remember that night?”

**BBB: Do you have a preference**







AA  
42NO

LW  
50

364

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CLOSE THIS DOOR FIRST  
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ASER



“THE WHOLE IDEA OF THE FREIGHT MISSION IS REALLY FUN THOUGH,  
FROM PLAN TO EXECUTION, NO TWO FREIGHT NIGHTS ARE THE SAME”





## between the two?

SERVO: You know, it really depends on the day. I generally prefer freights because of their capacity to travel vast distances. They both have different qualities, depending upon the surface or location. Freights offer a rush that walls simply cannot fulfill. They contain a certain quality which, in my opinion, nothing can equal. It's the smell of hot rail ties in the summer and the look of box cars reflecting in the moon light when you roll up to the spot. Nothing beats it. Recently, I have been painting a lot of solo missions which include looking out for rare freights that only show-up once or twice a year. Most of the freights that roll through are

the classic CP red boxes that do travel, but tend to stay in the area for much longer than say a TBOX or a Green CP Pac-Man Newspaper-Only car (personal favourite). This often inspires me to plan specific colour combinations to best suit the background freight colour, making the piece as visible and popping as possible. In some ways, freights pose a greater challenge than walls because of infinite number of variables that go into the project. Too many times I have gone with an all-too complex plan that really shouldn't have been executed on that day and sometimes that ends in a half-done fills, backgrounds, and full bag of paint at the end of the night.

**BBB: Considering many writers have different opinions on what a "toy" is, what is your definition of the slur?**

SERVO: This is an interesting question. Some people think that a 'toy' is classified as anyone who has been writing for say five years or less. I have seen writers who have only been active for two years and burn half the stuff people have been doing over and over and over for the past decade. To me, a toy is someone who is disrespectful. Its all about attitude. Someone who paints rocks or rail ties at the spot to "test their paint", needs a refresher on the rules of freight painting. Or someone who thinks they







are better than everyone because they have 'the 'most ups'. Respect is the name of the game. Respect spots and those who came before you. Learn from your elders and carefully craft your art. Even today it is sometimes difficult to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to doing nice panels because there are so many good train writers out there. Freight painting is a sport in itself.

**BBB:** Graffiti has always been

linked to the hip-hop culture and is considered one of the "Four Elements". Do you feel as if this is the case or is it just as much hip-hop as it is hard rock?

SERVO: One of the newest things to emerge from graffiti culture is 'hipster graffiti'. For sure this is not the kind of hip-hop inspired graffiti that we think of from the mid 70's and 80's. However it is something that is evolving as music and style cultures change too.

In other words, style influences graffiti as different types of people become associated with different styles and genres. It's interesting to watch the evolution of graffiti as it pertains to 'what's hot' in the music or culture scene. I wonder what Dub-Step Party-Time graffiti looks like? I'll let you know...

**BBB:** How has painting graffiti affected your everyday life as person (i.e. friend, family, job, etc...)?













It has created many friendships, meeting people in places that I probably would not have come across if it weren't for graffiti. It sounds cliché, but the most interesting places I've found myself, whether it be in the middle of nowhere British Columbia at this amazing freight spot in the forest, or doing street level burners in Taipei, good people and good times are sure to follow. It's been mostly positive, but the 'alter ego' that accompanies it can sometimes be difficult to navigate.

**BBB: If you could only choose one**

**fill colour and then use black for outline and white for highlights, what would it be?**

SERVO: Probably light Teal or Turquoise, love that ish.

**BBB: Other than graffiti, can you name another thing in your life you could not live without?**

SERVO: Probably, a vehicle. I enjoy travelling every weekend to new spots that I have not yet explored. And my snowboard- if I

could live on the hill, I would.

**BBB: You're sitting at home sketching, what three albums would be playing on your earphones while cooking up some funk?**

SERVO: Have you heard of Songza? Any music, any time. (I should get paid for that shout out.) But really, recently I am into Rodriguez, this musician from the 70's who made it huge in South Africa, but was completely unknown in the Americas until the mid 90's. I also have a thing for Imagine Dragons, and



Dubstep – anywhere, anytime.

**BBB:** Where do you see graffiti and/or artistic endeavours taking you in the next 15 years?

SERVO: In the near future hope to travel again. Most likely to Asia, but Europe is getting tossed around too. It seems to me that in most parts of Asia graffiti is still so adolescent, so there is so much opportunity out there. As

for my art, I am hoping to do more collaborative work with other artists. Whether that be in the gallery or on a panel. In any case, there will be much more in store from this guy.

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### FLICKR: CANADIAN SPECIFIC

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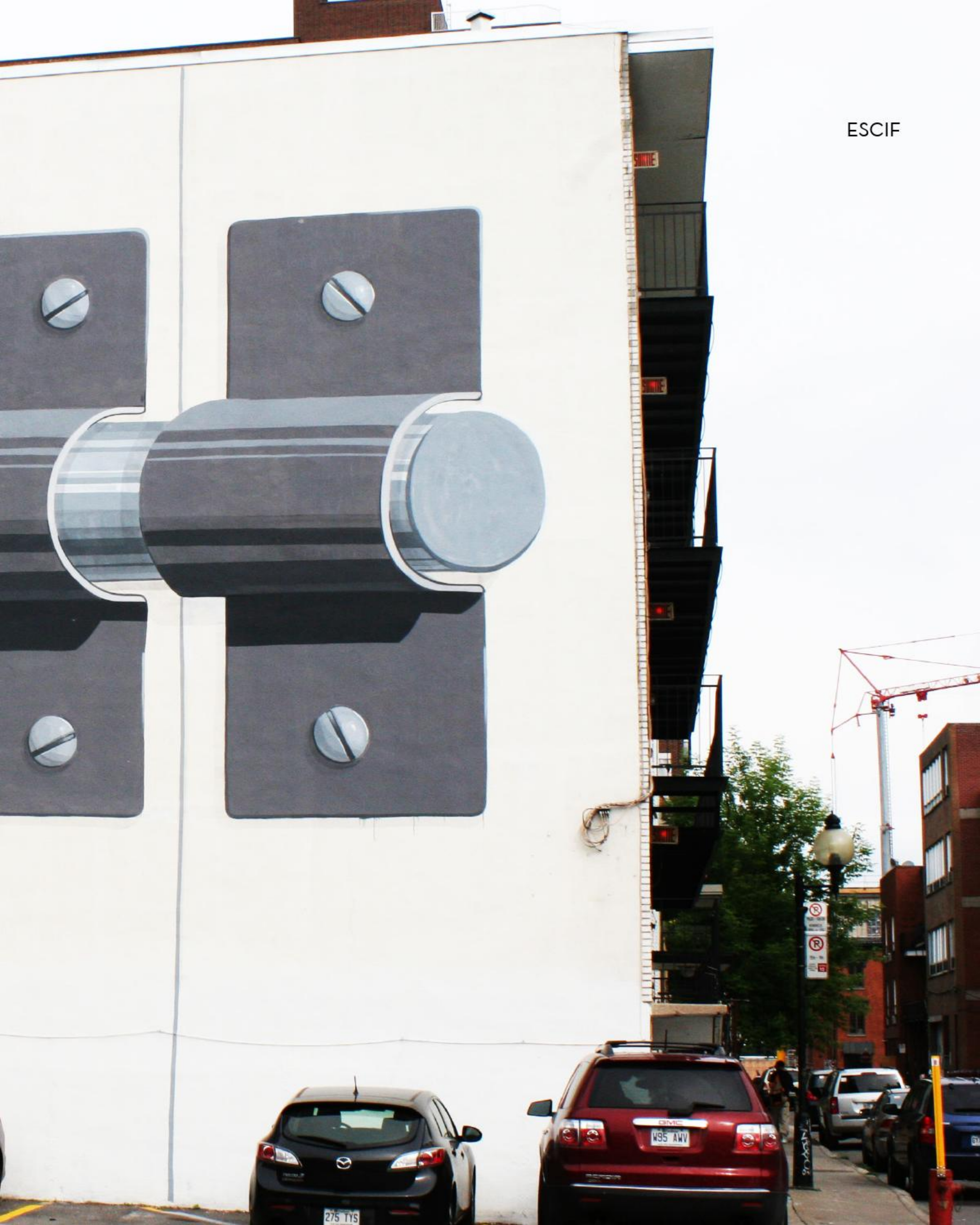


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